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ABSTRACT

This series is intended for music educators and features speeches and articles by leaders in music and arts education on a wide variety of current issues. This publication deals with defending the role of arts education in the public schools and recognizing important issues involved with the quality of present instruction. It warns of the consequences resulting from the trend to view the primary function of the school as providing only basic educational programs, which, among other things, would relegate arts education to out-of-school programs at best. The argument contends that the primary reason for arts education is to help all students become knowledgeable about the arts, which could be accomplished with occasional visiting artists programs. However, the need for structure, sequence, and regular participation necessitates that arts education be based in the school for success. The booklet also discusses the implication that there is a serious imbalance in many music curricular offerings, and several contributing factors are cited. The issue concludes by advocating different kinds of music course offerings that include performing, descriptive analysis, and composing. The paper also includes a selected list of Music Educators National Conference (NEMC) publications. (TRS)

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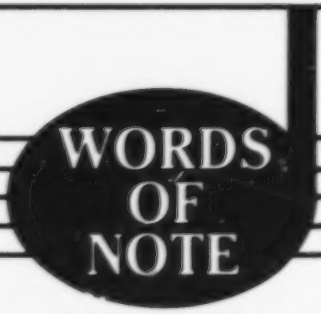
WORDS OF NOTE

This new MENC publication series is for music educators interested in getting quick, on-target information, trends, and opinions to share with their colleagues, PTA groups, civic organizations, administrators, and others. *Words of Note* features speeches and articles of substance by leaders in music and arts education on a wide variety of current issues.



TEACHER COMPETENCE AND THE BALANCED MUSIC CURRICULUM

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Based on a speech prepared for the
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Public education. The public puts such power and hope, disappointment and frustration, success and failure, inequity and equality into these two words. Yet public education has been one of the great successes and debates of the American dream. Given its triumphs and current tribulations, we must recognize that it has liberated so many both intellectually and socially, confined few, and integrated a vast mix of diverse cultures into our distinctly American society. Without it, the creative genius responsible for the incredible human experiment in which we participate would never have materialized. We are still analyzing public education, as well we should analyze any social institution that influences so many people. While we may solve shortcomings, make improvements, and strengthen public education with reports, reforms, or reorganization, we must never forget its unique contribution to our society and democracy.

Webster's dictionary defines public as "belonging to or concerning the people as a whole: of the community at large . . . ," while education is "the process of training and developing the knowledge, skill, mind or character . . . by formal schooling, study, teaching or instruction." We must always remember that our public educational system, although never constitutionally mandated, has been the equalizing factor for the people of our country. Our forefathers recognized that dissent and anarchy were bred from ignorance and a lack of informed involvement in society. An educational structure that provides systematic learning only for the financially able is one that will doom a democratic social and political system built on equality to failure. The

beauty of our current system is that all peoples are informed enough to participate in the system . . . politics, religion, business, social reform, and the arts. The direct access we possess to the great public movements of our time is attributable to public education. It must continue to be the unifying force for peoples in our society and to prepare us for the role we play in the culture we cherish and defend. Without public education we cannot hope to have a society that functions in totality—caring, compassionate, defensive of individual and group liberties, sharing human achievements (including the arts), and fostering intellectual advancement. I doubt that there has been a greater role for a social institution in any civilization to date. Let us not denigrate, cheapen, or trivialize its place in our culture, or formulate untenable quick fixes for its current problems.

Webster's definition of public education is compelling to us as arts educators, for the transmission of a society's achievements, the study of its mind and character, and the analysis of a community of people is inexorably linked to the study of the arts and thus to public education. Rational educators cannot discuss the role of public education without including arts education, for it is the arts that provide us a tangible picture of a society's maturation—an evolutionary cycle from primitive culture to high civilization, a representation of the ultimate intellectual advances of man's mind in a given age. We measure the quality of a civilization by the art it produces. Pieces of painting, sculpture, music, drama, poetry, or dance represent measurable advancements in the human creative spirit. The lifestyle that produced them may be extinct or forgotten, but the products of other peoples and times are the visible reminders of their perceptions. If we are to measure the greatness of this and past civilizations, public education has a primary role to play in providing systematic experiences in appreciation and participation in the arts for all students.

There is a mood sweeping the country that would deny or reduce access to our cultural heritage for future generations. The current plethora of national reports on education, beginning with "A Nation at Risk," were all well-intentioned and point to weaknesses and deficiencies that threaten permanent damage to our educational system. Lurking in those reports is an assumption—a dangerous thesis—that a new, lean form of learning based on the three Rs and called "basic education" is better for our students than broad learning in all academic fundamentals including the

arts. Virtually every report gave some endorsement to the study of culture and the arts, yet there has been a failure by press, public, and even educators to give education in arts disciplines parity with the so-called core subjects. Whether a case of editorial benign neglect or public misconception (few people have read any of the reports), arts education continues to be accorded secondary status. The inference is that "the arts are nice to have, but only if you have the basics first."

What can be more basic to human beings than the arts? Sociologists tell us that man's early forms of verbal communication were probably in a sing/speak combination of sounds, just as infants begin communicating. Early civilizations and our young children present us with remarkable iconizations and abstract representations of everyday experiences and ritual through art, dance, and imitation. It is fascinating yet disturbing that we can relegate these important developmental building blocks to an ancillary role in public education, especially considering the advances that have been made in arts education in the past twenty-five years.

I recently read a book that sheds great light on this very subject. Howard Gardner's *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (New York: Basic Books, 1983) contends that there are six basic, innate intelligences that humans develop in a systemic fashion. Spatial, kinesthetic, linguistic, mathematic, logical, and musical processes are all interrelated so closely that no one can develop adequately without definitive experiences with the other five. While separate, cognitive functions are performed in different parts of the brain, these creative skills constitute the whole core of human intellectual development.

We must be so careful as we manipulate educational formats for various socio-political reasons that we do not jeopardize the ability of our children to develop as whole persons, utilizing all forms of creative intelligence. Let us not through neglect, ignorance, or expediency create young automatons who possess high technical skills in math or science but have no keenly developed "feeling" skills with which to relate to other human beings. Are we on the verge of producing a generation devoid of humanism, indifferent to creativity, cold to color, melody, or movement?

Just as fragile as a biological ecosystem, the process of arts education is a gradual process of cognitive development that takes time to establish each step, from infant to adult. If we break a link in the biological chain, the ecosystem dies. If we remove a

link in the arts education process, we shall lose our public in arts participation.

As educators, we must determine the future direction of our programs, wresting them from political manipulation and educational simplistics before we damage that most human part of human learning.

Let us look at this curious word that is causing us so many problems. Says Webster's dictionary about basic: "is, of, or at the base; forming a basis . . . fundamental; essential." Thus, the term basic as applied to education is rather absurd, for all education is basic in the preparation of a human being for social interaction and advancement. The current reassertion that some forms of education are more important than others (and no one is going to argue against students learning to read, write, possess computational skills, and understand scientific concepts) has started single-issue educators and an ill-informed public on a witch hunt of prioritization that seems out of control.

Too, there is an awful connotation about the words basic education in the financial and political sense. They imply a slimming treatment toward a general commitment to educating the total child. Through simplistic antidotes (take two more math courses and get plenty of computer literacy), we are addressing the problems of education through a reduction of our responsibility and commitment rather than pursuing reformation in a reasoned manner.

Financially we are at a loss as to how we are going to fund these proposed reforms, for money is needed to provide more math and science teachers, purchase computers, and create attractive salaries and innovations such as merit pay and career ladders for teachers. Since the funding of public education is a hot political item, there is little hope that we can escape the extensive politicizing of our problems by state legislatures and local boards of education. What we must avoid, but are not avoiding, is a hierarchical ranking of educational offerings using "basic education" as the measure of merit. If an increase in funds for educational funding is limited to token gestures during this first critical year of publicity, we will see important educational opportunities shaved to provide money for the "basics." There can be no result other than a divisive struggle among school faculties and programs for these limited funds. Anyone want to bet where the arts will fall?

I find a unique form of intellectual Reaganomics being played

out in the halls of our public schools and state capitals. The simplistic prescriptions of the "basic educational" philosophy (more math, science, and homework, fewer frill courses, and increased discipline) are thrown about with reckless abandon. Teachers, parents, administrators, and legislators seldom agree on what constitutes a frill. It is unfortunate that we do not see the parallels in such rhetorical phrases as "family values . . . sound defense is the best defense . . . America is proud again" and other simplistic nostrums of political campaigns.

Clearly, there is a mind-set developing that cannot be ignored—one that argues that the primary function of the school is only to provide "basic" educational programs. Just as we have experienced a relegation of responsibilities for major social programs to state and local governments, so might we experience the relegation of major school cultural and artistic programs to the home, parks/recreation program, or private institutions. The parallels are disturbing, but the reality is that such directions are being pursued on a daily basis across this country.

How will arts education be handled if it is removed from the public schools? Where will students go to learn the arts disciplines? What will be the quality of teaching? How many students will participate? Those espousing the philosophy that advocates removing arts education from the public schools are constantly gaining new achievements. This movement would relegate arts education to out-of-school programs and visits to schools by professional artists, musicians, dancers, poets, and actors.

According to the tenets of this philosophy, schools in the future would see an explosive increase in artists in the schools programs; these would replace regular instruction in the arts disciplines. In order to serve those families with the means and will to afford arts instruction, a cottage industry of home schools for art and music would flourish, while music stores, art galleries, museums, and theater or dance companies would create or expand educational offerings.

The most significant benefactors of such a design would be those agencies and organizations primarily concerned with the employment of professional artists not now involved with or dedicated to teaching. One wonders whether those interested in moving education in the arts from the standard school format to "artists in schools" are motivated primarily out of concern for the quality of instruction in the arts or for improved balance sheets of professional arts presenters.

The arguments for visiting artists programs are persuasive to school administrators. The cost of a visiting artist at $100 a visit three times a year (being careful not to interrupt math class) is attractive if one is able to save or redirect the average $19,000 salary for a specialist teacher in an arts discipline. Added to this is the argument of basic education: "if those parents want study in the arts for their child, they'll just have to pay for it. Our job is to teach the basics. We don't have time for the frills."

What about student participation? I would be shocked if any more than 10 percent of present public school students would participate in serious after-school, private arts activities. Nationally, the figure would probably be lower, for many rural areas do not have the resources in people, programs, or institutions available in metropolitan areas. Furthermore, the increased financial responsibility for parents would be a significant negative factor. Only those parents who could afford or were willing to sacrifice based on an appreciation for the arts (and how many of those were trained in the public schools?) would provide these experiences for their children. We would be creating a vicious caste system in arts education, a form of cultural segregation based primarily on family income but also on race, handicap, and geographic location. Having worked so hard to reduce cultural deprivation through joint public and private efforts in the past three decades, it is debilitating to think we might have to struggle down this road again.

How would the arts be taught? A program based on random visits by artists to the schools is the same as no program at all, for students will not learn the arts disciplines by observing once a month. Structure, sequence, and regular participation are what arts education is all about: students can be more creative if they are given the frameworks of expression. Visiting artists do not necessarily allow that to happen. While they do provide important role models for children, allowing students to see and hear people who have careers involved with the creative process, no visiting artists program can take the place of sequential classroom activities that allow all children to participate on an equal basis in learning the arts as disciplines.

What curricular content and organization would be found in arts programs sponsored by private agencies or individuals? Would students be exposed to a broad range of the arts, or would they be channeled into specific activities and "burned out" by overzealous specialists in those areas? Are out-of-school teach-

ers prepared to deal with large numbers of children, to understand their learning patterns and difficulties, to perceive and structure curricula based on the developmental stages of children and youths and to be sensitive to the student's need to be a child and not a miniature adult? To what extent can visiting artists be expected to understand or care about the need for disciplined and sequential learning? How will they allow for experimentation and mistakes among their students? How will these artists deal with discipline, motivation, and reward systems? Can a business-like atmosphere conducive to intellectual development be created? Above all, will content be directed toward learning subject matter rather than random experiential activities? The success of any educational program is based on the quality of the teacher and the ability of that teacher to communicate with students. To become a successful teacher takes years of training and experience. What guarantees are there that out-of-school programs will be competent to provide all these important elements of arts education to all children? None.

Arts educators are not against education programs sponsored by private agencies, parks/recreation activities, music stores, museums, dance or theater companies. These play an important role in helping young people specialize after they have been introduced to the arts disciplines in schools. They provide a valuable source of instruction for those who have determined that they have specific talents and skills in a particular discipline. These programs also play a vital role in continuing education for adults, providing studies in creative expression in which all of our population may participate.

The primary reason for arts education for children is to help all students become knowledgeable about the arts, not to become skilled performers or practitioners. Thus, programs outside the schools will not, cannot, and should not be the sole educating medium in the arts for our population. It would take but one generation of children deprived of systematic arts education in the public schools to create a population less sensitive to the arts. One has only to look about and realize that the explosion of music, art, theater, dance, and museum programs in the last twenty years has come from the systematic presentation of these disciplines to children in the public schools. One can easily chart the rise of participation by Americans in the arts over the past fifty years consistent with the implementation of arts education programs in the public schools. If we damage or change that

A Selected List of MENC Publications

Eclectic Curriculum in American Music Education: Contributions of Dalcroze, Kodály, and Orff. Beth Landis and Polly Carder. Delineates principles and teaching procedures of three major European musician-educators. 1972. 147 pages. $8.00(M); $10.00.

History of Public School Music in the United States. Edward Bailey Birge. No music library is complete without this classic! Traces the history of music education. An exact reprinting of the 1937 edition. 1985. 323 pages. $7.50(M); $9.00.

Music and Music Education: Data and Information. Tables and charts display the latest data from a variety of sources. 1984. 63 pages. $12.00(M); $14.50.

The Future of Musical Education in America. Published by the Eastman School of Music Press of the University of Rochester, New York. Proceedings of the July 1983 conference cosponsored by Eastman and MENC. Full texts of all speeches. 1984. 90 pages. $9.95(M); $12.50.

Study of Music in the Elementary School—A Conceptual Approach. Prepared by the MENC Elementary Commission: Flavis Evenson, chairperson; Charles L. Gary, editor. A guide for teaching music through the conceptual approach. 1967. 182 pages. $5.50(M); $7.00.

Becoming Human through Music. Explore different musical cultures as you take an armchair tour of the world! Complete papers from the Wesleyan Symposium on the Perspectives of Social Anthropology in the Teaching and Learning of Music, Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut. 1985. 134 pages. $12.00(M); $14.50.

Documentary Report of the Ann Arbor Symposium: Applications of Psychology to the Teaching and Learning of Music. Sponsored by MENC and the University of Michigan and supported by the Presser Foundation. Twenty-four eminent music educators and psychologists relate psychology to improved classroom practices. 1981. 372 pages. $15.00(M); $18.75.

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cycle, there is no question that participation in the arts would drop dramatically at all age levels. Do we really want to go backward in the educational process?

While we are strongly defending the role of arts education in the public schools, we must recognize important issues involved with the quality of present instruction. If we are concerned about the quality of teaching that might exist in a private program, we must be doubly concerned about the product we now offer in the schools, making sure that teachers, curricular organization, instructional methods, and relationship to other academic activities are the best they can be. We will be targets for program reductions if our programs are not productive. The current mood of the country and the challenge "basic education" presents to us should serve as a warning that changes are going to occur. If a program has done a poor job of educating students in the arts, then keeping that program just for the sake of the arts is not a sound educational rationale. If we are to demand our rightful place in the curriculum of the future, we cannot ask for more than we are worth. While children do have a right to quality experiences in the arts, they have a more important right to quality instruction in the arts disciplines. It is our job to see that they get both and that a child's right is never jeopardized by poor program quality, politics, finances, administrative changes, or misguided public conceptions. Our fundamental concern must be the quality of education in the arts received by students.

I recently met a student in our local supermarket who had dropped out of one of our fine high school music programs. I asked him why he had quit, and his reply was devastating in its honesty. "Being in orchestra is not going to help me make the big bucks," he said. My mind raced with questions as we finished our conversation. Where had we gone wrong? Perhaps we are looking, as a society, for the easiest way to obtain everything. Time savings through technological advances are greater and greater. True, we can obtain some kind of arts experience more quickly, easily, and with less effort than at any other time in history. Push the button, turn the dial, or pop in the cassette, and any art form we desire is available.

While the arts may be easy to obtain, they are far harder to value, and, as educators, we must concern ourselves with this valuation. As we move towards a society that spends greater amounts of time in leisure activities, we must be sure that we provide all of our students with equal opportunities to know and

contains, to a greater or lesser degree, some study using performing, descriptive analysis, and composing *at all levels.* There is further balance—essential to the performing and descriptive analyzing strands: diversity in media—that is, in the size and type of performing group one plays or sings with or listens to—and diversity in the styles of music played and heard.

Roadblocks To a Balanced Curriculum

The implication—imbalance in many music curricular offerings—is made here and not without foundation. On a national average, only 12.5 percent of high school students elect music as a subject. What makes this percentage more devastating is that it has remained constant for over twenty years. Many factors can be identified as contributing to this small outreach.

1. Paucity of alternatives. The only offerings in high school music in many school systems are performing ensembles (band, orchestra, chorus, jazz ensemble, or show choir).

2. Student-perceived involvement. Many students either do not have, or do not wish to give, the amount of time needed to perfect their performing skills in voice or on instruments.

3. Teacher-perceived role. Most teacher training institutions concentrate on methodology courses for prospective high school music teachers on recruiting, organizing, and conducting large and small ensembles. Once in the field, the teacher is rated on how well the performing groups rank at contests and festivals.

4. Community perception of the role of music in the curriculum. Success is a heady thing. To the community a winning band or an entertaining and well-choreographed show choir puts the music program in the limelight. As shall be seen later in this paper, this can become a two-edged sword.

That there is imbalance at the high school level is a given. Most performing group members cannot analyze or describe the music they perform. Certainly they do not have time to attempt any theoretical learnings that would enable them to compose music. Specialty ensembles, moreover, play or sing one style of music in one ensemble medium. In some instances, performing ensembles have been known to practice the same three or four selections all year in order to rank high at contest and festival time.

Unfortunately, much of what happens at high school filters down to the middle-school or junior high school levels. More and more "general" courses targeted for the nonperformer are being scrapped in favor of choral and instrumental programs where

only the best are selected. It may soon be a common practice to eliminate music for every student after grade six or earlier.

Are we safe in saying, then, that elementary music programs are well-balanced? In many school systems they don't even exist! When budget deficits have been realized, elementary music programs have been the first to be categorically cut. In other programs there has been as much single-focus teaching as in the high school performing program. Children learn songs by rote and accompany themselves on beautiful, easy-to-play instruments with music learned by rote. Children are not taught how to describe and analyze the music they perform. The *busyness* of the elementary classroom music program precludes quiet reflection, attentive music problem solving, labelling of musical events, or discriminating, categorizing, comparing, analyzing, and synthesizing in a musically literate way.

A Conflict on the Horizon

While the community loves a winner, the community also views music education from a singularly narrow standpoint: as entertainment. To the average layperson, the mention of music education conjures visions of a halftime marching show, 50 percent of whose participants do not play music! This is *all* the community as a whole knows about the music education program simply because it is the most visible part available to the broadest spectrum of the tax-paying voters. By the year 2010, however, 50 percent of voting adults will be over forty-five years of age. Twenty percent of voting adults of child-bearing years will choose not to have children. Of the remaining 30 percent, few, if we continue our imbalanced ways, will have children in music programs at all. In these days of "back-to-basics" mentalities, we can hardly make a case for music as a basic education subject when so little attempt is made to offer a broader range of courses in our subject to a wider spectrum of students K–12. If fine arts credit is mandated for graduation and only performing ensembles are available in music, the rush may be on toward literature, drama, dance, and visual arts (always provided they, too, don't fall into the performance pit with us!).

What is the alternative? Am I advocating anarchy in the performance ranks? Of course not. One does not stop doing what one does well—and American school performing groups on the average nationwide are the biggest, best, and most musical in the world. It was through performance that music education gained

credibility. Performance provides instant accountability for school music programs.

Rather, the advocacy is for different kinds of music course offerings in addition to performing groups and aimed at an entirely different clientele, the disenfranchised music lover. What form and substance these offerings take is merely a matter of unbounded and unbiased creative thinking. Whether the courses are scheduled as year-long, sixteen-week, eight-week durations is a matter of course, type, and series of pilot studies. Whether two or more arts join forces to develop a syllabus in allied or integrated arts is moot.

What one must remember, however, is that any music portion of a course or any self-contained music course should try to include the study of music through performing (even in such a class, and performing as a means, not an end), descriptive analysis, and composing. This is the way music works. This is the way our students should learn to work with music.